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A Story of Kentucky

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She heard me and turned her calm glance upon me.

"What makes you look so pleased?" she asked.

"No, it is not I."
"But it is something about you. It is because you are a new Alicia, or rather the early one come back again, the little Alicia Warren with whom the little Harry Clarke played at school."

My reply gave her pleasure. I saw it in the brightening of her eyes, and the sudden proud spirit of her head.

"I wonder if you have not told the truth," she said thoughtfully. "I do feel as if I were a young girl again, and the past winter has been the least unhappy that I have had in my life."

Six years, I think, too, Harry, that your success has helped. I feel as if I were finding repayment."

"I have been overpaid already," I said, "and I want to tell you Alicia, that a little while ago I was afraid to see you, but I have no such fear now."

"You must say dinner, Governor," said Mrs. Wharton, and she did not need to ask a second time.

The French have a phrase in family which we cannot adequately render, but which I think that I must use. Wharton's and I felt how deeply pleasant it is to be in a house on terms of ease with cultivated women who are all that is implied in the old-fashioned word of the family, an older brother perhaps who had returned from a brief absence.

The Whartons and Mrs. Guthrie carried most of the table talk, Alicia and I joining in now and then with occasional words, but my ease and lightness of spirits continued. After dinner we adjourned to the great library or sitting room where the ruddy light from the hearth and the glow of the over floor and walls, and continued our desultory conversation. I lingered two or three hours filled with the sense of home, and loath to give it up.

It was not until I had said good night, and I felt that I was leaving a warm, comfortable home, that I remembered that I was not alone in the world.

When she reached the crest of the hill she stopped and looked eastward, where the lovely Bluegrass region rolls away under a dim horizon.

"It is pleasant to be here," she said. "It is for me!" I exclaimed. "Oh, Alicia, if you were only here always with me!"

I think I was carried away by the intoxication of the moment—I plead no other excuse—and I seized her hand. She drew it away, but she did not reproach me by either word or look.

"We must not forget, either of us, that I am another man's wife, and that I have another man's name," she said. "You love me, I know that, I am proud of it and the knowledge of it is the greatest thing I have. I love you too, I do not seek to hide it from you. Often I think that in the beginning it was intended we should be man and wife, but some unlucky chance, some slip in the wheel of fate, changed it. It is past mending now, but Harry and I can show the world that we are superior to it. It can be a meeting of the souls, but nothing else."

It was the spiritual quality in her that spoke, and I was humbled, although as I have said there was nothing of reproach in word or tone. Women alone I believe—and but few of them—can feel a love that is not marriage; perhaps it is higher and purer, but man cannot live upon it always.

"You are the Governor, and you must not let me interrupt it," she said in the utter calm of one who has now a complete victory over herself. "You would not drive me away from Frankfort, I know, but I should have to leave there were anything even the slightest, which your enemies could use to assail your name."

"I forgot myself, but it was for a moment," I said. "I am a shepherd, not a man, Alicia, that while I have had repayment, and far more, you have had none. The world is hard on women."

"I am not unhappy now," she said. "Perhaps I should say that I am happy. I feel almost as if I were beginning life over again. I am, in a sense, free, as I never was before in my life. Would that you were wholly free!"

I exclaimed. She passed it over without notice, and then we talked of lighter things. I did not fully share her interest in the subject, but was uplifted. I have always felt that my love for Alicia Grey was the best part of me, and it was pure enough to make sacrifice, if not easy, at least possible.

We spoke no more of love, but in a way we were boy and girl together. I know an old line, I do not know who wrote it. "I'd rather be a shepherd boy upon the Grecian hills than reign a king in Hades," and I felt that way the afternoon I met Alicia on the hills above Frankfort. We stood a long time on the crest, looking at the river, the ridges, and the rolling green country to the dim eastward. There was nothing in our manner but that of two comrades, or of two people who had met by chance in a walk. Yet I had never before felt quite so near to her or that she was quite so approachable. This new relationship of the spirit was not wild, and it was not a dream. It was a reality, and we were united in the spirit, and strength came.

Fleecy white clouds sailed past us in a sky of silky blue, a lizard rattled the bark of a tree as he scuttled upward, a stray horseman passed, paying us little attention, and at last the red fire of the sun began to burn over the dim valley to the westward. The breeze blew colder and Alicia shivered a little in her cloak.

"It is time for me to return," she said. "You'll see me to Judge Wharton's?"

"Gladly," I replied, and we walked slowly down the hill, side by side. I had begun to share her feeling that criticism, any arrows of gossip leveled at her because we knew she loved, and while I remained a poor mortal who would have been glad to take her in my arms had I the right, I could regard her only with reverence, and horror from her own spiritual strength.

We reached the edge of the town, passed only an occasional person, some of whom knew me and some of whom did not. Those who knew me bowed and then looked curiously at the beautiful pale woman who walked beside me but Alicia took no notice. In the town, of course, we met many acquaintances, but we continued together to the house of Judge Wharton.

The Judge himself, after the homely fashion of our little cities, answered me best, and when he beheld the two of us together, I saw him give us both a quick inquiring glance.

"Won't you come in Governor," he said. "The chill of the twilight is here and the finest fire in Frankfort. I want you to enjoy it for a few minutes."

I saw through the open door the glow of the fire from the sitting room, and as it fell across the floor of the hall, and I yielded. I accompanied the Judge to the sitting room while Alicia went upstairs. It was indeed a place re-

dolent of comfort and peace, half sitting room, half library. A great bed of coals glowed in the wide fireplace of cast a warm, ruddy glow over the floor and the walls.

The Judge would not let me go in the few minutes only that I had expected to take. He was a good deal of a bibliophile and he had just secured a quaint old edition of Horace that he wished to show me. After that he must recite to me one or two of the odes in his sonorous Latin, and then Mrs. Wharton, Mrs. Guthrie and Alicia came into the room.

They made no fuss over me, because I happened to be the chief official of the State, but treated me merely as a comrade who had come in at the usual time. There was no constraint, no excessive politeness, but an ease, a lightness like that of a well-ordered home, where everything moves with peace and harmony. It was like a broad band of light suddenly shooting across the darkness of my lonely life—and I basked in the glow.

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they would fall, and ready in an emergency to send the militia.

That night while I was among my guests a telegram was handed to me. It came from the railroad station nearest to the scene of conflict, and said that a pitched battle had occurred two days before between the Kents and Horners, resulting in three deaths on each side.

I had asked to be excused while I read the telegram, and when I had read it I felt a flush of anger on my face. It was disgraceful that such things could be happening in Kentucky in the twentieth century, and I resolved to stop it if all the power lodged in my hands had to be directed to the effort. Alicia was near me as I read, and she noticed my expression.

"I hope it's nothing bad," she said. "I only thought that some of our people in the mountains persist in murdering each other." I rejoined. "And I suppose the State will have to murder some of them to make them quit the habit."

"Do they know better?" she asked. "They should," I replied, and then I slipped away to my private room, where I sent telegrams to militia companies at Louisville and Lexington to start at once for the mountains. When the morning came I was gone with the dispatches, I sat for a few moments somber and thoughtful. What could the militia do? Preserve the peace while they were there, and as soon as they came away the old lawlessness and midnight assassination would be resumed. Witnesses in fear for their lives would not dare to testify and the courts would be terrorized.

It was a disgrace, a very deep one, and then came to me the thought to go with the militia. I might look into this trouble, probe it to the very bottom, and find out for myself the best cure. Surely, too, they would pay some respect to the Governor.

I decided in an instant. I would go. Nothing in the State was worthier of my attention, and relieved by the resolve, I went back to my guests. I said nothing until after the refreshments were served, and then Alicia was the first whom I told.

"I am going away from Frankfort to-morrow," I said.

She looked at me in much surprise, but she said somewhat lightly: "Why, you can't go; you are the Governor."

"That's just why I'm going," I said. Then I told her of my intentions and she approved it. "But don't get shot," she added. Again she spoke lightly, but I thought I saw anxiety in her tone, and it was not unpleasant to believe that it was for me. The next to whom I told my plan was Judge Wharton, and he, too, commended my purpose.

"These things give us an evil name," he said. "They are the deeds of a very small minority, but we are responsible for them nevertheless."

I told no others, and I asked these two to say nothing, but as soon as all my guests were gone I ordered Seth to pack, in order that I might leave early the next morning. He was to go with me, and he was to be with me in the morning.

The uneducated mind of our mountains was higher than the Himalayas and fairly swarmed with wild men, who, nevertheless, were armed with the most modern breech-loading guns, with which they fired at the innocent traveler from every bush.

"Do you think I'll get back alive, Governor?" he asked, shuddering again with that sense of dangerous delight—Seth was no coward.

"I think it probable," I replied. It is but a brief run from Frankfort to Lexington, and I stopped at the latter city, where the militia companies that I intended to take with me were to meet. The Louisville company had already come down the night before, and as an after-thought, intending to search the mountains thoroughly, I had ordered a third from Winchester, for which we should have to wait a few hours. I went at once to the camp of the Louisville company, and to my great astonishment the first man whom I met was Harrison, a lieutenant in the uniform.

"You did not know that I was an officer in this company, Mr. Clarke," he said quietly, "and I had almost forgotten it myself. But when you called me to Louisville last night our captain telegraphed me in Frankfort, and I came on to Lexington, where my uniform and other equipment met me."

I was not sorry that I met Harrison with us on this journey. His keen and ironical eye might see many things which others would overlook, and it is not pleasant to feel that one is watched by the man whose criticism he dislikes most. But I told him in the usual formal manner that I was glad he was going, and he added: "Other old friends of yours are in the company. There is Mr. Timothy Applegate, a second lieutenant in this company, and Mr. Connor, late a member of the Legislature, and also an officer in this company."

I saw them a little later, Applegate, inflated with pride in his uniform, and the thought of active service; and Connor, almost proud of his grey hair, but silent even sullen. I paid no more notice to either than was necessary, and then, after a brief inspection, I left the camp.

The Winchester company arrived at noon, and we left a half hour later on a special train for the railroad station whence we were to start for the long journey among the mountains to the seat of war. We ran for a while through the beautiful Bluegrass region and then entered the hills, where we made our camp of the first night.

Before we started the next morning, straggling mountaineers came in drawn by the sight of the troops and the knowledge of our mission. I questioned several as closely as their natural taciturnity would let me. No fresh outbreak had occurred in the last few days and the most potent weapon for peace had been the influence of the great preacher and revivalist.

(Continued on Page 9.)

CHAPTER XVI.
The Wilderness Call.

I went again, and more than once, to the house of Judge Wharton, although I took care to see Alicia only in the company of Mrs. Guthrie or Mrs. Wharton. Despite the unconscious heights from which she looked down I would not have the taint of gossip to touch her, and I took every precaution to keep her from the knowledge of the capital, nevertheless, but it did not come to my ears nor to hers, and if one is ignorant of such a thing it does not exist, so far as one is concerned.

I wished to discharge all the social duties of my place, and at regular intervals I gave receptions at the Governor's mansion, assisted by Mrs. Guthrie, Mrs. Wharton or other ladies in Frankfort, and I enjoyed them. I repeat that I have the social instinct, I like to see well-bred and handsome people together; I like the lights, the music, the bright dresses of the women and good talk. Alicia usually came with the Whartons and Mrs. Guthrie, and her manner and bearing were irreproachable. Although a wife, living apart from her husband, she radiated such an air of purity that she was thoroughly established in the good graces of Frankfort, and if gossip touched her, as I have no doubt it did, because in every community there are foul-minded people, it was done obscurely and with caution.

Just before giving one of these receptions I heard that Harrison was at the capital, and I promptly sent him an invitation. He appeared on the appointed evening rather early, a distinguished figure, his pale, thin face lighted up with keenness and intelligence. Although I believed that he had set out during the campaign the story about my mysterious disappearance, I reflected how little cause he had to like me, and I did not cherish hostility.

"It's kind of you to ask me here," he said, when I gave him the formal welcome.

"It is your right to come," I said. "I wanted to be asked," he said. "You can't get the old story of the moth and the flame. I cannot stay away from Alicia Grey forever."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask him the name of the woman, but I restrained the impulse, and when Alicia came I saw him watching her at a distance with eager eyes. Presently he went up to her and spoke. Of course I did not hear the words, nor did I seek or wish to hear them, but I knew that she replied coldly, because his face fell, and soon he withdrew to another room. I saw him regarding me later with a look of intense dislike and suspicion. I read his mind, I believed that if I were out of the way he might win. It was a curious fact, but always he seemed to regard Grey with a negligible quantity. I felt anger then toward him, not because of his dislike, not because of the injustice that he did me, but because of the greater injustice that he did Alicia.

That evening was a memorable one in my life, because of the conjunction of persons and events. At so inopportune a moment an affair threatening some time some came suddenly to a head. All the world knows that the blood feud still lingers in the wild mountains that crowd the Eastern part of our State; in the wildest of them all the Kents and the Horners had been fighting throughout the winter, and there had been several deaths, all assassinations. I had kept an eye upon the matter, expecting the local authorities to cope with it, but fearing that

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